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AUTHOR Owen, Jane C.
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ABSTRACT

This paper analyzes the changing public school superintendency. It reports on a study that identified the roles of the superintendent in facilitating positive and productive community involvement in the educational process, as well as the strategies and tactics used by superintendents as they mold community climates to create receptivity for educational improvement. Two large districts in southern Texas were chosen for the study, both having been characterized by discord between the community and the schools. The focus is on two new superintendents and the roles, strategies, and actions they employed to align their respective districts with the community. To provide background information, the text discusses "The superintendent and the community" and "The superintendent and change." The study methodology followed an emergent naturalistic multiple-case-study format and incorporated M. Q. Patton's theory that qualitative methods are particularly oriented toward exploration, discovery, and inductive logic. A pilot study was conducted to fine-tune interview questions. The findings show three major leadership roles are part of the superintendent's job: political leadership, educational leadership, and managerial leadership. The strategies and tactics enacted through the leadership roles are discussed. (Contains 41 references and 8 figures.) (RJM)

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The Roles of the Superintendent In Creating a Community Climate For Educational Improvement

by

Jane C. Owen

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The Roles of the Superintendent

in Creating a Community Climate

for Educational Improvement

The foundation for this study is a recognition that the roles of the public school superintendent are changing radically. If public education is to continue to be a primary force in the development of our citizenry for productive service, the characteristic roles of the superintendent must be better understood and appropriately modified to maintain positional power in order to facilitate the educational process. Over the past several decades, the position of the superintendent has been transformed from one of a "fatherly authority figure" to that of a negotiator who primarily handles conflict (Mirga, 1985). From an "assistant to the school board" (Knezevich, 1969, p. 236) to "a major player working with the city, working with law enforcement agencies, working with parents, working with churches, working with the community in general" (Kowalski, 1995, p. 81), the role of the superintendent has evolved into a position of perceived power and influence in most communities. Peterson and Finn (1988) underscore the importance of the role of the superintendent in organizational effectiveness: "Practically never does one encounter...a high achieving school system with a low performance superintendent." Conversely, it has become obvious that when things do not go well in the schools, "the superintendent is perceived as an obstructionist"...the superintendent is the "wrong kind of person," poorly trained, or "incompetent" (Campbell, 1966, p. 50). Obviously, the job of the superintendent is critical; it must change as an increased consciousness of racial,

ethnic, and social class balance is emphasized and as the political nature of the position intensifies.

Because many communities are taking an increasingly active and vocal position in the day-to-day management of the public schools, it is contingent upon the superintendent to model educational policies after the desires of the community as well as guide the community's efforts toward sound educational principles (Jackson, 1995). Pitner and Ogawa (1981) state that many contemporary superintendents feel a moral responsibility to maintain consistency between educational programs and community values, therefore requiring community input. Furthermore, it is necessary for the superintendent to develop strategies and tactics to successfully incorporate community needs and expectations with those of the wider environment in such a way that neither community standards and values nor the superintendent's are violated (Konnert & Augenstein, 1990).

The purpose of this study is two-fold: (1) to identify the roles of the superintendent in facilitating positive and productive community involvement in the educational process; and (2) to identify the strategies and tactics used by public school superintendents as they mold community climates to create receptivity for educational improvement. Two districts were chosen for study, both having been characterized by discord between the community and the schools. Through the efforts of new superintendents, both districts moved to positions of alignment and congruence with the communities in which they were embedded. This study focuses on the roles, strategies, and actions that were employed by these two superintendents in order to impact the

community climate in a positive manner and to provide an environment in which educational improvement could occur.

Background

> *The emergent community-school concept will create a new definition of public school, somewhere between "professionally circumscribed participation on the one hand and total community control on the other" –Levin, 1970.*

The role and expectations of the community are changing, reflecting an increased desire to participate in the education of its children. Today, school district constituents who exercise their right to contribute knowledge and state their preferences before decisions are made, who are able to undermine the superintendent's efforts if they so choose, and whose support the superintendent needs in order to be successful have created a new and very political arena in which the profession of education is practiced (Johnson, 1996). No longer are the community members satisfied to leave education to the professionals; they are demanding equal partnership in decisions made which affect their children (Levin, 1970). No longer do parents limit their participation to that of clients, delivering children to the school and trusting that the education process will be properly implemented. The community-school concept dictates that the parent participatory role will surpass that of a mere client and become advisory and decisive.

As schools have been given more independence through site-based management, as teachers acquire more power through shared decision-making, and as parents and other community members are integrated into the decision-making process, the image of the successful superintendent is changing to connote a more collaborative style of leadership (Mitchell & Beach, 1993). Former methods of autocratic leadership and top-down communications are no longer accepted in many schools, districts, and

communities as viable methods of interaction (Crowson, 1990). As a result of this changing balance of power, the superintendent is caught between the demands of the board, the principals, the teachers, and the parents and students (Mitchell & Beach, 1993). This shift in the balance of power for district control in substantial matters presents another area which requires expertise in communication and community relation skills on the part of the superintendent (Jackson, 1995). Underlying professionalism is the implicit contention that educators possess knowledge and skills not held by the general public, while parents and community members contend that they know what is best for their children (Kowalski, 1995). The superintendent is charged to serve as a mediator between these two groups in an attempt to insure that a balanced, quality, appropriate education for every child is the result.

The Superintendent and the Community

> *It's always a balancing act because there are so many pressure groups. More so than ever before, and the funny thing is that we have made it happen that way. We have really pushed the idea that everyone should be involved in the schools. So now I have so many different constituencies out there with so many different interests that y problem is to try and keep them appeased. – Anonymous superintendent in Blumberg study, 1985.*

The reactions of superintendents to their changing position are varied, and, as is expressed by Kowalski (1993) "the role of the superintendent in an increasingly decentralized organization is unclear and not fully defined" (p. 315). Some superintendents are uncomfortable at the prospect of being held accountable for things they cannot always control such as site based decision groups (Kowalski, 1995), while others see site based decision making as a viable and worthwhile trade-off to engender feelings of ownership and commitment in the teachers as a result of the participatory

decision making effort (Holdaway & Gage, 1995). Some superintendents initially view the participation of citizens with a mixture of resentment and apprehension (Blumberg, 1985; Johnson, 1996; Mitchell & Beach, 1993). They worry that parent councils might set standards that are either too high or too low; they fear that the public will not be fully cognizant of the complexities of educational issues when making decisions (Kowalski, 1995). On the other hand, a study of large city educational administrators revealed that they believe school-community relations are important to the success of their programs (Jackson, 1995). Cuban (1985) points out that what is called "public relations," or working with the community, is actually politics--trying "to establish coalitions of groups and individuals who will support the mission of the schools and to minimize any damage done by critics" (p. 29). Millman (1982) states that politics are not a negative but simply the way things are. He asserts, "Politics can be understood as the art and science of the possible. The main goal is achieved in pleasing the greatest number of people" (p. 26). Therefore, superintendents' views toward input and lay control from the communities that they serve range from concern and dismay ("It threatens the quality of public education by subjugating professional judgment to the whimsical or biased judgments of uninformed lay boards") to welcoming acceptance ("The kids and their parents are our clients") to political gameplaying (how much change can be introduced without provoking community conflict?) (Mitchell & Beach, 1993, p. 263; Hallinger & Murphy, 1982).

It can be unequivocally stated that superintendents work in increasingly complex environments, and that these environments make great demands on them as leaders while reducing their credibility as knowledgeable educational professionals (Johnson 1996). If

superintendents are to lead toward a goal of better educational opportunities, it is not enough that they simply make good decisions and issue sound orders (Sizer, 1992). It is critical that they know how to analyze the community power structure and learn who the major players are. In order to be successful, superintendents need to understand the community interest groups and become adept at meshing their agendas with those of the school (Jackson, 1995). In order to maintain integrity, the superintendent must consider the position of political scientist Amy Gutman (1987): "To prevent education from being repressive, we must defend a principal's limit on both political and parental authority, a limit that in practice requires parents and governments to cede some educational authority to professional educators" (p. 48). If part of the purpose of schooling is to change society as well as perpetuate it, school leaders may need to rethink the goals of schools and their own values (Jackson, 1995). The successful superintendent must walk a fine line between facilitating positive change and respecting the culture in which the organization is embedded (Musella & Davis, 1991).

The Superintendent and Change

> *Without a leader who can articulate a new mission, an organization will plow straight ahead, a creature of habit. Without a leader who can organize and motivate others to pursue a new strategy, an organization will follow its traditional modes of operation, or pursue the private agendas of its members or employees. Without leaders, organizations will do the same thing tomorrow that they did today" – Gerstner, Semerad, Doyle, and Johnston in Reinventing Education Entrepreneurship in America's Public Schools (1994)*

Implicit in the purpose of this study is the presupposition of a change process. The strategies and tactics used by a superintendent to influence change are defined in the literature by Schein (1985), Tichy (1983), Peters (1978), and Pfeffer (1981),

among others. While each of these organizational theorists proposes slightly different models for change, the basics are quite similar: (1) attending to desired values and deliberate role modeling; (2) shaping organizational systems to express cultural assumptions; and (3) interpreting the symbolic elements of an organization. It is also an accepted fact that change will frequently be seen as a challenge to cultural beliefs that will lead to conflict, dispute, disruption or concern. Because most change will impact the culture of an organization, wisdom dictates that an understanding of the organizational culture is critical prior to attempts to bring about change (Musella & Davis, 1991). The superintendent is a key player in bringing about change in a district; in fact, district-wide change is not possible without the support, encouragement, and involvement of the superintendent (Clark, Lotto, & Astuto, 1984; Jones, 1990). Therefore, it is critical that the superintendent be acutely aware of the subtleties and intricacies of the change process in order to move the district forward in a positive and progressive direction. The normative stance that the role of the superintendent is to improve, not maintain, education in most communities leads to the expectation that the superintendent will act as a change agent to improve the district—but it often involves provoking conflict in communities (Burlingame, 1988).

Change always involves risk-taking on the part of the change agent, and this fact emphasizes the superintendent's significance in the change process. A higher level of leadership ability is required of the transformational leader than of the traditional transactional leader who is focused on standardization and stability in an organization (Norton, Webb, Dlugosh & Sybouts, 1996). In order to create a community climate for

educational improvement, the superintendent must skillfully balance the existing community climate against the stresses of change so that the necessary change can be successfully accomplished without an accompanying upheaval in the community.

Study Design

The methodology for this study was designed around Lincoln and Guba's (1985) emergent naturalistic multiple-case study format, and followed Patton's (1990) theory that qualitative methods are particularly oriented toward exploration, discovery, and inductive logic. A pilot study was conducted with three community leaders (a board member, a former board member, and a parent) and the superintendent in a district in which the superintendent had facilitated a noticeable degree of positive change in community climate. During the pilot study, the interview instruments were tested, resulting in some modification. The pilot study served to refine the focus and fine-tune the interview questions as well as expose other salient areas of inquiry.

The sample was purposefully selected using the chain sampling procedure (Patton, 1990) in order to identify districts in which the superintendents had not only survived but also thrived, who had entered unstable and problematic districts, and who had facilitated noticeable improvement in community climate. The criteria for selection were as follows:

1. Inclusion on the Texas Education Agency's (T.E.A.) Intervention List, indicating that the district had at one point been under the guidance or governance of T.E.A. because of poor student academics. The poor performance led to a negative community climate.

2. A change in the superintendent which occurred as a result of the T.E.A. intervention or as a result of the problems that provided the impetus for the intervention.
3. Nomination by knowledgeable experts who could testify to an improvement in educational conditions and community climate, as a result of the leadership of the new superintendent.

Following the criteria, two districts were selected for study. District A was a suburban district in southeast Texas, charged with educating over 20,000 students. The student population was over half African American, approximately a third Anglo, and the remainder Hispanic or "other." Almost 60% of the students were economically disadvantaged. The city in which District A was embedded was bifurcated by a major highway that divided the "haves" from the "have nots," and the city had a history of racial strife.

District B was an urban district composed of 47,500 students in Southwestern Texas. The large majority of the students were Hispanic with only 17% being African American, Anglo, or "other." Sixty-three percent of the students were economically disadvantaged. Factions that had coalesced around nationality, age, economic status and gender created divisiveness and tension within the population.

From these two districts, a total of nineteen selected leaders were interviewed using a semi-structured, open-ended interview format. Document analysis of board meeting agendas and minutes, newspaper accounts of district matters, and T.E.A. documentation, as well as observations and interviews, provided triangulation of data. A

long history of negative community climate and its alleviation through the effort of a new superintendent were the commonalties between these two districts.

Findings

The findings from this study revolve around three issues: (l) the roles of the superintendent that facilitate a community readiness for positive change; (2) the actual strategies and tactics used to promote positive change; (3) an understanding of the change process itself whereby the roles, strategies, and tactics can be timed and aligned to facilitate the desired results.

The Leadership Roles of the Superintendent

Three major leadership roles emerge from the data as being the components of the superintendent's job. These are the political leadership role, the educational leadership role, and the managerial leadership role. This finding is consistent with the work of Johnson (1996), Kowalski (1995), and Cuban (1985). The data reveals that the political leadership role is of great importance in the eyes of the stakeholders. As a board member from District A stated, "I consider one of his, if not his major role, to be the head P.R. [public relations] person for the district." The political role is implemented through three primary acts: building coalitions, negotiating agreements, and forcing concessions. While building coalitions and negotiating agreements were readily identified, the act of forcing concessions was not as frequently used.

Two or more attributes are necessary for the facilitation of each of the three acts. The act of building coalitions is facilitated by the attributes of visibility ("he was very visible, being in the public, working with the public in different venues"), open and honest communication ("speaking from the heart," "cutting to the chase,"), and people

skills ("he is easy to know, not what you'd call a stuffed shirt, an intellectual bigot...anybody can feel comfortable in his presence"). Sensitivity to community values was another attribute frequently mentioned by both community members and by superintendents. As the superintendent from District A stated,

> I'm a public servant. I am there for them, to try to make life better, to improve the school district. But they are the stakeholders, they are still in control, and the board is the governing body that they have put in charge of the district, and I am who they hired to operate the district. So they are still in control. Everything I do will be for their benefit and their well being because that is my purpose.

Willingness to empower, ability to inspire, and ability to unify were the final three attributes necessary for building coalitions. The unification of the district was described by the superintendents as being one of the most critical tasks. A subject superintendent described his strategy in the following words:

> Those things that are different we are just going to put them aside and focus on the things that unify us so we can work together, and once we get to working on those things that we feel good about, that we all have a common interest in, then we'll get to work on those differences. And a lot of times we'll find out those differences don't exist. They are more perceptions than they are realities.

The act of negotiating agreements is facilitated by the attributes of willingness to listen and willingness to compromise. According to the board president in District B, "The community objected vehemently to the uniform policy, and the superintendent listened and compromised. He said that each individual school should come back with the community decision rather than the central office administration saying this is what we want to do."

The act of forcing concessions is facilitated by the ability to direct the situation and the willingness to invoke positional power. When parent involvement was not willingly forthcoming in District B, the superintendent offered tuition-free summer

school in exchange for two hours per week of parent participation. His skillful direction "broke the barriers of parents coming to school," and 40,000 parents were involved in their children's education that summer.

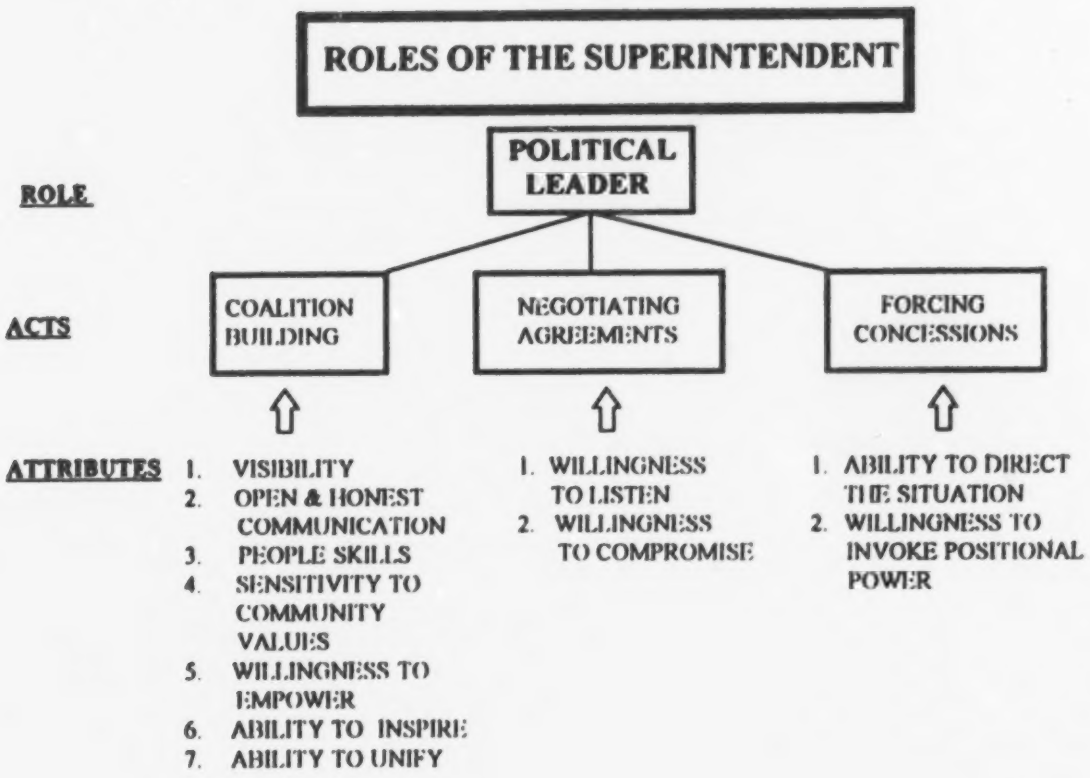
The success of the superintendent depends heavily on the success of his role as a political leader. As Johnson (1996) states, "for an educator to be above politics is to be outside reality" (p. 153). (See Figure 1)

The second role to emerge as being a component of the superintendency is the educational leadership role. A community member from District A stated succinctly, "The superintendent is the person that the community looks to as the education leader, not the board." Along these same lines, the superintendent from District A asserted,

> I think more than anything else, a superintendent needs to be instructionally minded. And that places instruction first, not the business aspects of the school district, but let the instructional aspect of the school district come first. That people are first...not the books and the money and the buildings and the facilities and the bonds and all that kind of thing, but it's the people and they come first, and they should come first.

The role of educational leader is implemented by three acts: diagnosing local educational needs, discerning possibilities for educational improvement, and recommending strategies for improving teaching and learning for the district. The data reveals that each act of the educational leadership role is facilitated by two or more attributes. The act of diagnosing local educational needs is facilitated by the attributes of having a change orientation, acceptance of challenges and risks, commitment to education, and professionalism. A teacher from District B described the superintendent's actions as a change agent:

Figure 1


ROLES OF THE SUPERINTENDENT
ROLE
POLITICAL LEADER
ACTS
COALITION BUILDING
NEGOTIATING AGREEMENTS
FORCING CONCESSIONS
ATTRIBUTES
1. VISIBILITY
2. OPEN & HONEST COMMUNICATION
3. PEOPLE SKILLS
4. SENSITIVITY TO COMMUNITY VALUES
5. WILLINGNESS TO EMPOWER
6. ABILITY TO INSPIRE
7. ABILITY TO UNIFY
1. WILLINGNESS TO LISTEN
2. WILLINGNESS TO COMPROMISE
1. ABILITY TO DIRECT THE SITUATION
2. WILLINGNESS TO INVOKE POSITIONAL POWER

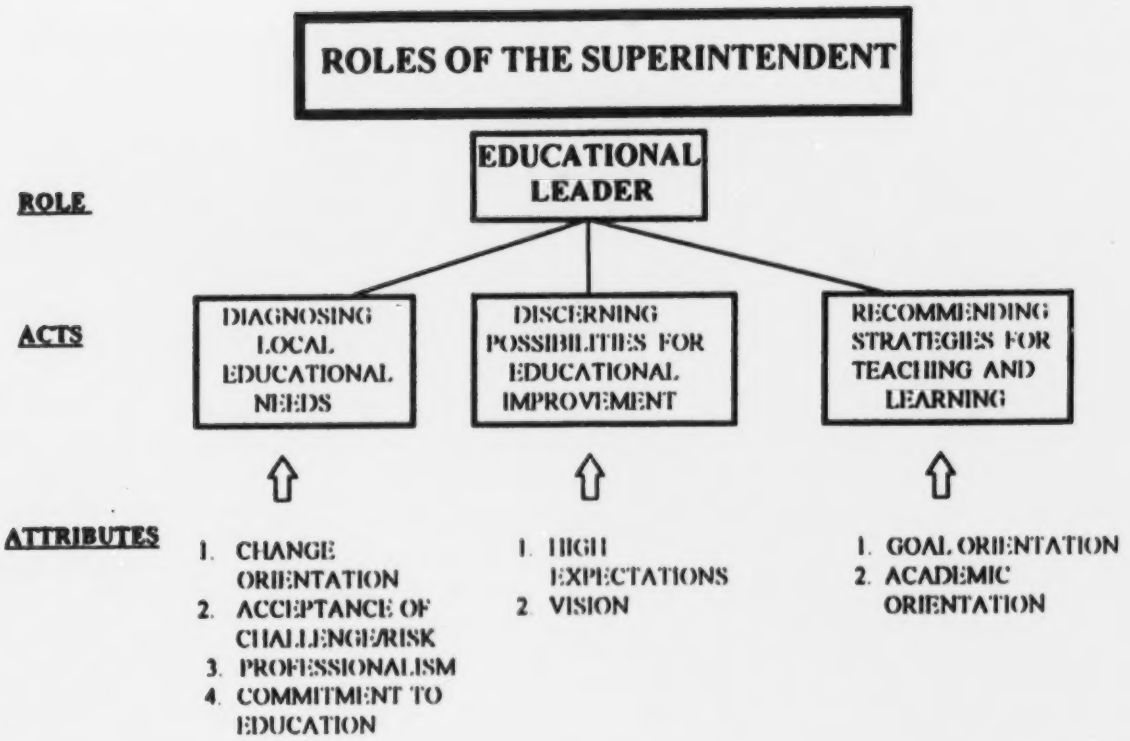
> I think that the superintendent thinks that the worst possible phrase that you can say is that 'that's the way we've always done it.' And because of that, there is nothing that he would consider a traditional approach that is acceptable unless it has proven results.

The act of discerning possibilities for educational improvement is facilitated by the attributes of having high expectations and having vision. Visioning was described as being one of the first responsibilities of a new superintendent—"he opened our eyes to what he, coming in brand new, could see needed to be done."

The educational leadership act of recommending strategies for improving teaching and learning is facilitated by the attributes of having a goal orientation and having an academic orientation. The superintendent of District A detailed his goal-setting process in the following words: "I had some kind of feel for what the community wanted, where they wanted to head, and this type of thing. Because they had expressed that enough times in the meetings I had with them." An academic orientation was described as being the abolishing of all remedial courses, having no expulsions from the district, scholarship foundations, and equity between ethnic groups. (See Figure 2)

The managerial leadership role is the third role to emerge as being a necessary part of the superintendency. In 1978, March described the managerial role as follows: "Much of the job of an educational administrator involves the mundane work of making a bureaucracy work" (p. 233). This description still holds true today. This role is implemented by three types of acts: interpersonal, informational, and decision making. Each act is facilitated by two or more attributes necessary for the implementation of the act. The interpersonal acts are facilitated by the attributes of the abilities to supervise, control, coordinate, and represent. Informational acts are facilitated by the abilities to

Figure 2


ROLES OF THE SUPERINTENDENT
ROLE
EDUCATIONAL LEADER
ACTS
DIAGNOSING LOCAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS
DISCERNING POSSIBILITIES FOR EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT
RECOMMENDING STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING
ATTRIBUTES
1. CHANGE ORIENTATION
2. ACCEPTANCE OF CHALLENGE/RISK
3. PROFESSIONALISM
4. COMMITMENT TO EDUCATION
1. HIGH EXPECTATIONS
2. VISION
1. GOAL ORIENTATION
2. ACADEMIC ORIENTATION

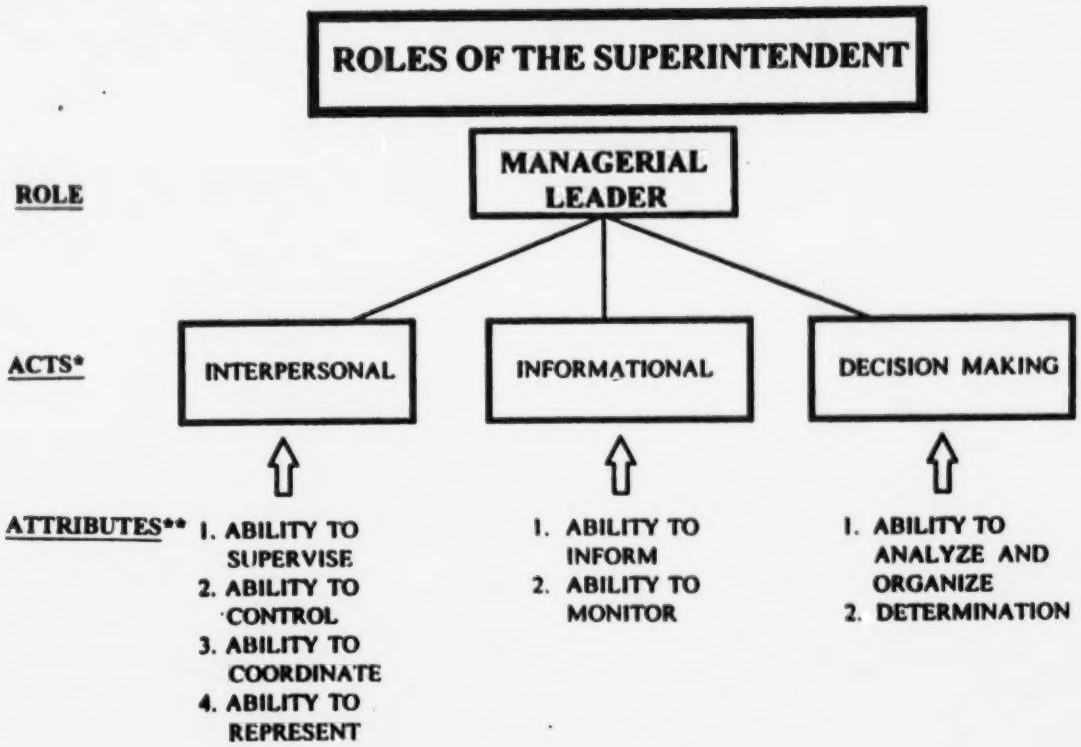
inform and monitor. The decision-making acts are facilitated by the attributes of the ability to analyze and organize, and determination.

While the superintendent's role as a managerial leader is sometimes seen as being more pedestrian than the educational and political leadership roles, it can be noted that "if the buses do not run or children are unaccounted for [the superintendent] is judged to have failed as a manager" (Johnson, 1996, p. 220). (See Figure 3)

While the three roles of political leadership, educational leadership, and managerial leadership comprise the position of the superintendent, they do not receive equal emphasis, in the perceptions of the respondents. The role of political leadership was the most visible to the stakeholders and was most frequently mentioned by them. The political leadership role was reported in 341 coded text units out of a total of 760. This equated to 45% of the total number of text units.

The study further reveals that the educational leadership role was reported in 298 coded text units, or 40% of the total number of coded text units. Attention to the educational leadership role was perceived to be manifest in the form of the superintendent's support for the educational process by hiring directors of curriculum and instruction, promoting educational programs, and verbally providing support. Respondent reports were that the superintendents had little direct, hands-on contact with educational matters compared to political and managerial matters. This reflects the concern expressed by Kowalski (1995) that the role of educational leader is being superseded by the time demands of the more immediately pressing roles of politician and manager.

Figure 3



* From Mintzberg, H. (1973). The nature of managerial work. New York: Harper and Row.

**From Yukl, G. A. (1989). Leadership in organizations. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, Inc.

The managerial leadership role was reported in 121 coded text units, or 15% of the total number of coded text units. While the respondents did not routinely observe the managerial duties, the results of these duties were seen as being very important. Financial support for teachers' salaries, technology, and the construction and renovation of facilities was a frequent topic that emerged from the data. The ability to use innovative methods to bring money into the district was also reported as a noteworthy attribute. (See Figure 4)

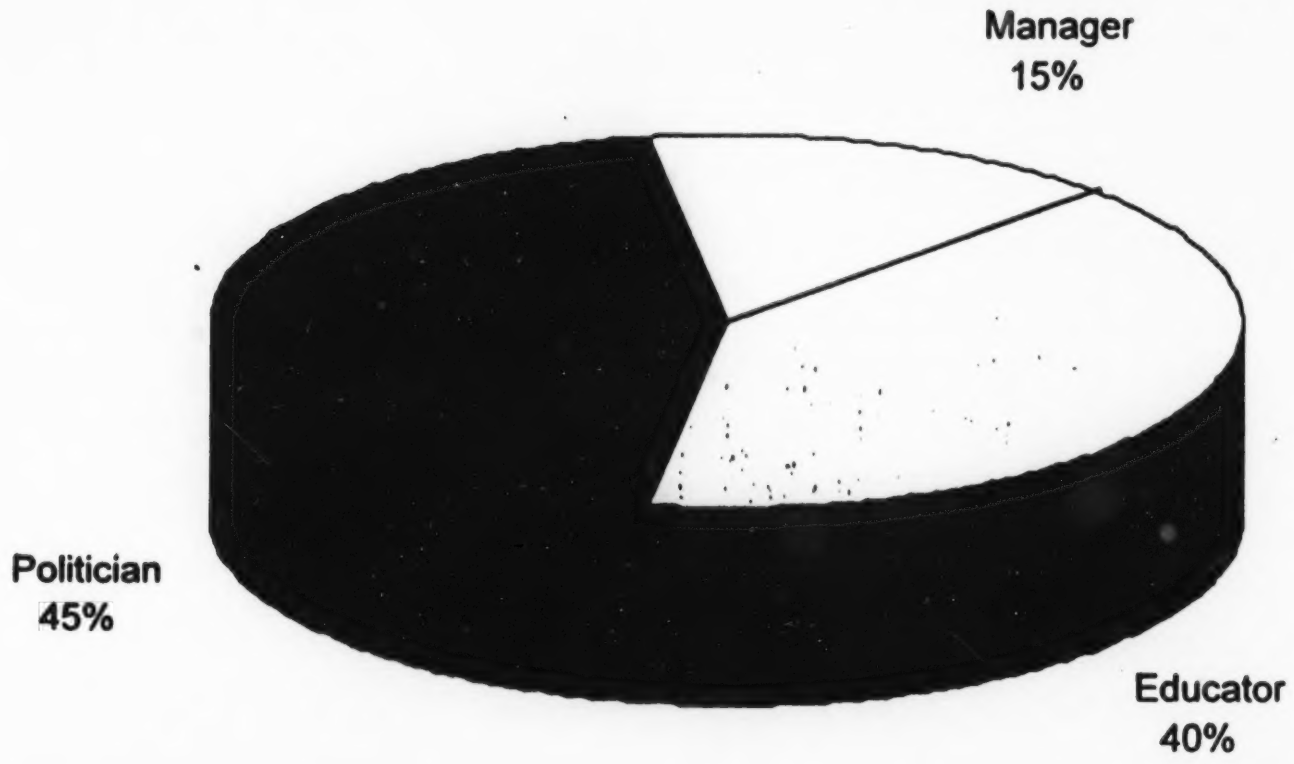
Strategies and Tactics Enacted through the Leadership Roles

Through the political, educational, and managerial leadership roles, the superintendent implements strategies and tactics designed to create a community climate for educational improvement. Strategies (defined as a broad group or category of related tactics used for the purpose of obtaining one's preferred outcome) and tactics (defined as a specific action or technique used to implement a strategy) are grouped under five purposes: (1) to establish commitment to education in the district; (2) to teambuild with the governing board; (3) to provide support; (4) to provide vision; (5) to unify the community. Each of these purposes is designed to address a specific source of dissatisfaction concerning education that existed in the community at the time the current superintendent assumed leadership.

Upon arrival in their respective districts, both superintendents observed similar negative manifestations of dissatisfaction in the community climate toward the local educational system. These negative manifestations were described as tension, divisiveness, lack of participation, and loss of trust. The negative manifestations could be

Figure 4

Roles of the Superintendent: Percentage of Coded Text Units Devoted to Each Role



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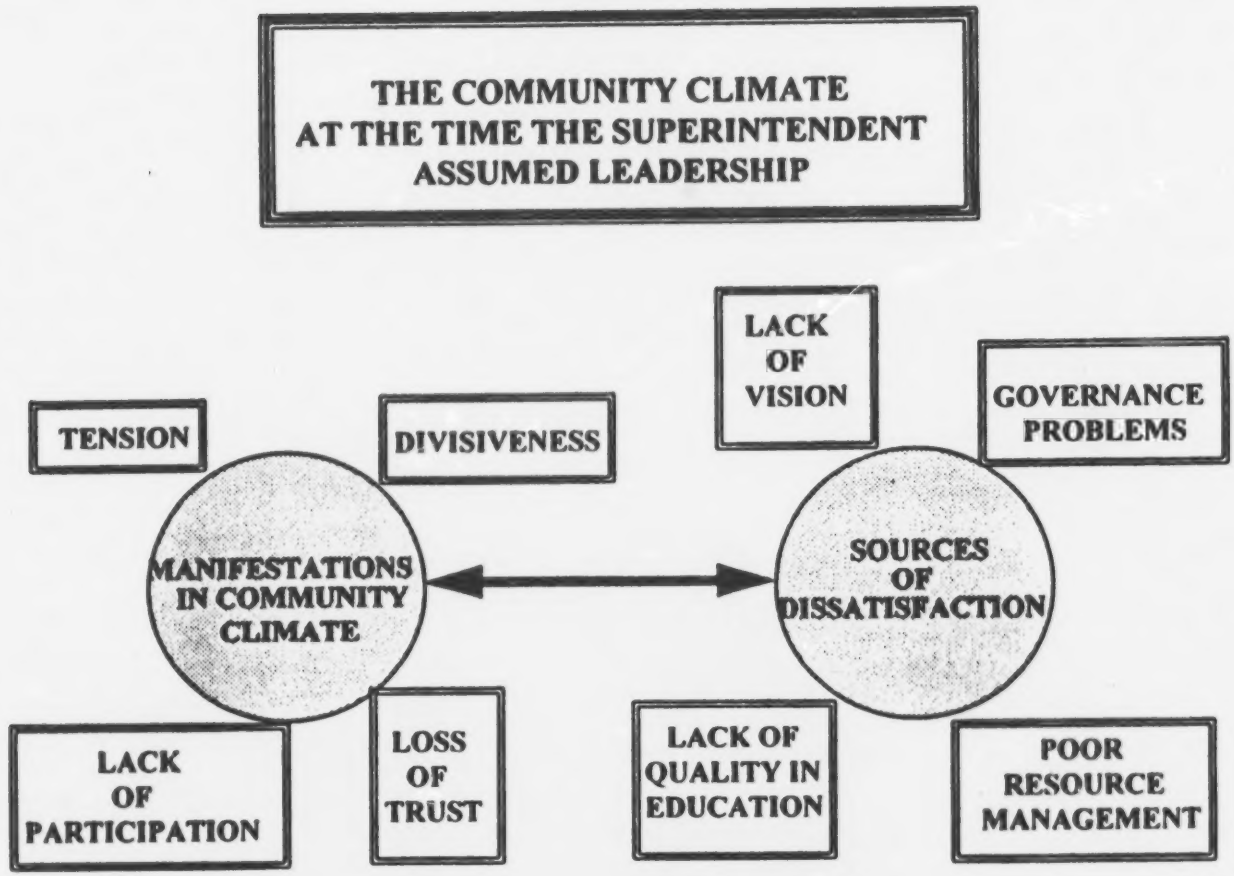
directly traced to the underlying sources of dissatisfaction: lack of vision, governance problems, lack of quality in education, and poor resource management. (See Figure 5) Strategies and tactics were devised to address each source of dissatisfaction.

One of the first concentrated efforts of both superintendents included in the study was to establish commitment to the district by the community. The superintendent's visibility in the community emerged from the data as one of the most critical strategies for establishing commitment. The Rotary president in District A stated, "I think visibility in the community and communication with the community is the first step in the role of the superintendent in creating a change of climate." In order to increase visibility, the superintendents employed four tactics: becoming an active member of the community, attending school and civic functions, visiting schools, and accepting leadership positions in the community. The second strategy used to implement the purpose of establishing commitment was the creation of alliances. As the city manager of City A stated, "People have to understand that we are all together." The creation of alliances was facilitated by the tactics of requesting support from community groups, building support through common goals, offering programs to the community, empowering individuals and groups to impact the school organization, and forming a positive relationship with teacher union representatives.

The second purpose was to teambuild with the governing board. This purpose was implemented through the strategies of development of trust and clear statements of expectations. The tactics of communicating openly, communicating equally with each board member, and informing all board members of matters affecting the district

Figure 5



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facilitated the development of trust. The superintendent of District A described the communication style necessary for creating trust with the board:

> There are never any secrets and if there is something going on, we try to discuss it ahead of time instead of springing surprises on people, and I think for the most part they certainly appreciate that, because most of the time if they go in a board meeting, there's not going to be a surprise spring up that is going to be embarrassing to any of them.

The strategy of making clear statements of expectations was facilitated by the tactics of clarifying board member responsibilities and clarifying standards of expected conduct.

The third purpose was to provide support. This followed Schein's (1992) theory that psychological safety is necessary before any changes can occur. The purpose of providing support was implemented by four strategies: stabilization of the environment, demonstration of competence in the tasks of superintending, the presentation of a positive outlook, and attention to the needs of the staff. Strategy 1, stabilization of the environment, was facilitated by the tactics of communicating openly, timing changes, and establishing reliability. Strategy 2, demonstrating competence in the tasks of superintending, was facilitated by the tactics of improving facilities, building new facilities, initiating new programs, and raising funds. Strategy 3, presentation of a positive outlook, was facilitated by the tactics of speaking positively and optimistically and by expressing a belief in the values and ability of all community members. Strategy 4, attention to the needs of the staff, was facilitated by the tactics of providing reasonable compensation, evaluating fairly, and offering staff development opportunities. Supportive behaviors on the part of the superintendent fulfilled the need for psychological safety for the stakeholders.

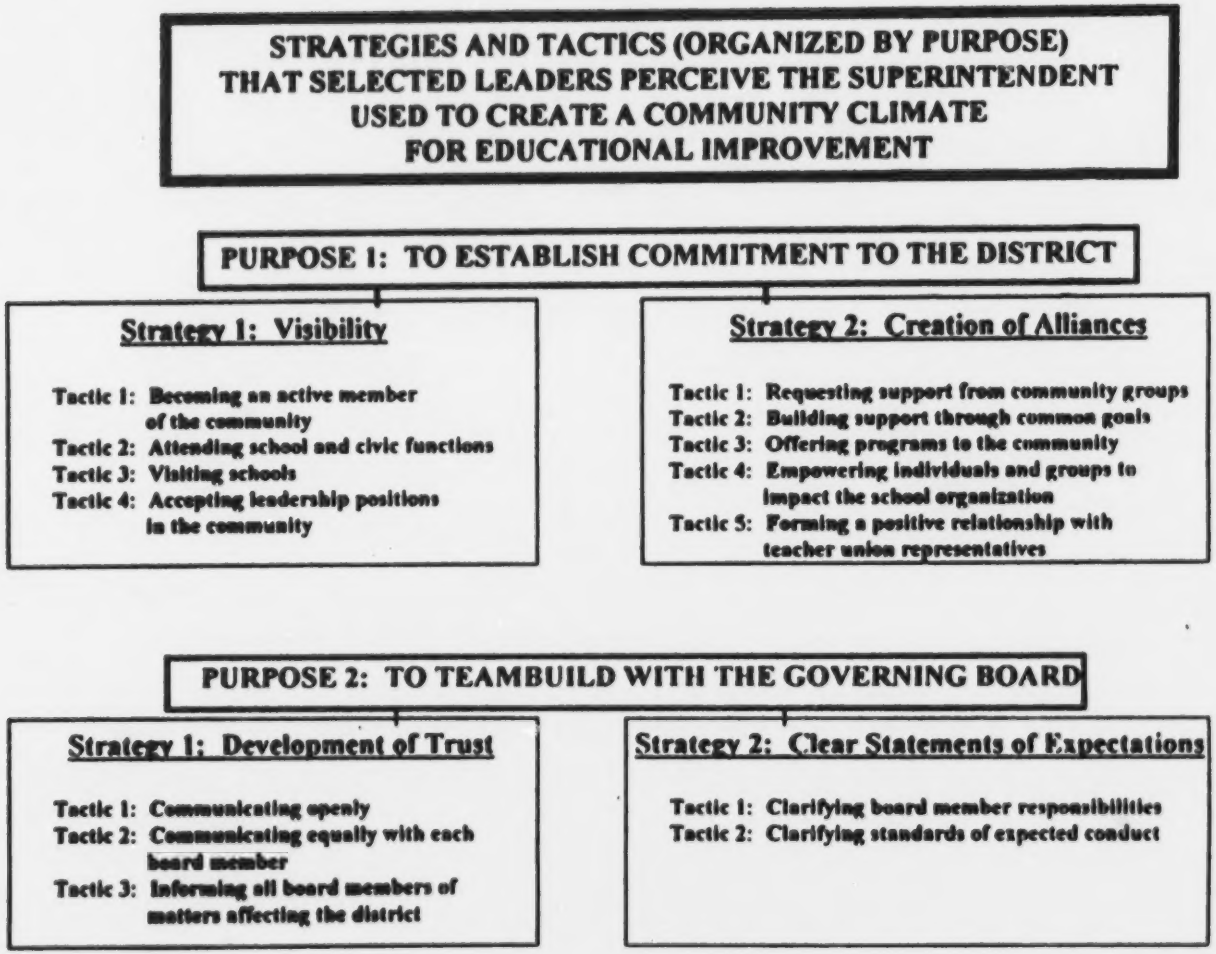
The fourth purpose was to define a vision. Four strategies implemented this purpose: definition of reality ("This is a sick district and certain difficult medicines are needed"); solicitation of community input ("I would like to know what your problems are and how I can best approach your problems"); establishment of a direction ("You just have to articulate it to them: here's a good, quality school system, and work from that standpoint"); and establishment of goals ("When these goals were outlined, and we all got to participate, they all said, 'hey, these deal with the problems.'"). Each strategy was facilitated by two or more tactics.

The fifth and final purpose was to unity the community. This was implemented by two strategies: involving the community in the educational process, and extending the school into the community. Strategy 1, involving the community in the educational process, was facilitated by five tactics, all involving bringing the community into the school. Strategy 2, extending the school into the community, was facilitated by the tactics that provided a vehicle for services to be provided to the community by the school. These strategies served to interest and empower community members and encourage them to take a proactive stance on educational issues. One respondent reported that the constituency "made things happen because the superintendent made them believe they could make things happen." (See Figure 6)

Impact of the Strategies and Tactics on the Sources of Dissatisfaction

At the time of the study, the respondents reported the current sources of satisfaction with the local educational system. The sources of satisfaction were grouped into four categories: vision, appropriate governance, high quality of education, and effective management of resources. The sources of satisfaction translated into a positive

Figure 6


STRATEGIES AND TACTICS (ORGANIZED BY PURPOSE)
THAT SELECTED LEADERS PERCEIVE THE SUPERINTENDENT
USED TO CREATE A COMMUNITY CLIMATE
FOR EDUCATIONAL IMPROVEMENT
PURPOSE 1: TO ESTABLISH COMMITMENT TO THE DISTRICT
Strategy 1: Visibility
Tactic 1: Becoming an active member of the community
Tactic 2: Attending school and civic functions
Tactic 3: Visiting schools
Tactic 4: Accepting leadership positions in the community
Strategy 2: Creation of Alliances
Tactic 1: Requesting support from community groups
Tactic 2: Building support through common goals
Tactic 3: Offering programs to the community
Tactic 4: Empowering individuals and groups to impact the school organization
Tactic 5: Forming a positive relationship with teacher union representatives
PURPOSE 2: TO TEAMBUILD WITH THE GOVERNING BOARD
Strategy 1: Development of Trust
Tactic 1: Communicating openly
Tactic 2: Communicating equally with each board member
Tactic 3: Informing all board members of matters affecting the district
Strategy 2: Clear Statements of Expectations
Tactic 1: Clarifying board member responsibilities
Tactic 2: Clarifying standards of expected conduct

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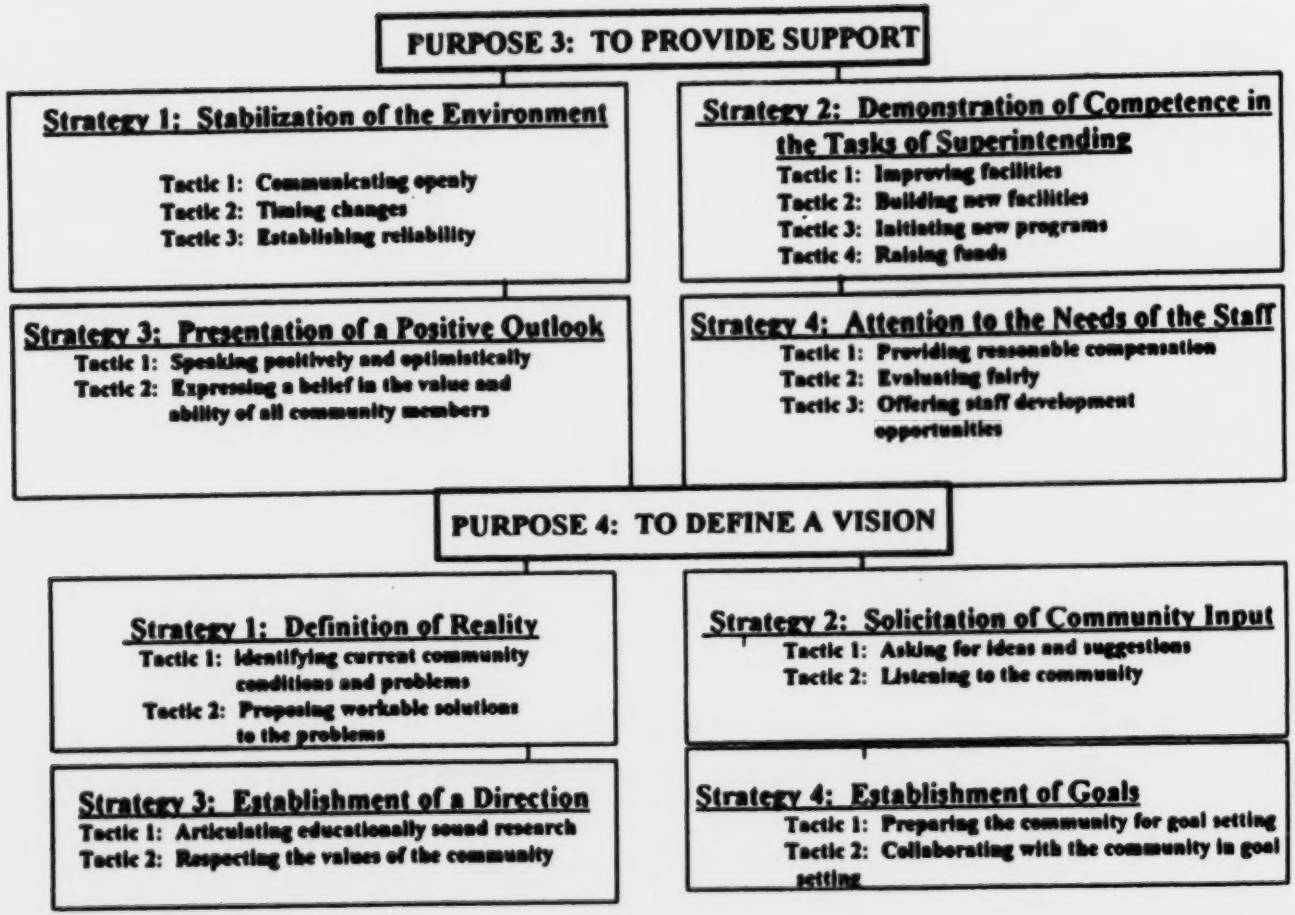
PURPOSE 3: TO PROVIDE SUPPORT
Strategy 1: Stabilization of the Environment
Tactic 1: Communicating openly
Tactic 2: Timing changes
Tactic 3: Establishing reliability
Strategy 2: Demonstration of Competence in the Tasks of Superintending
Tactic 1: Improving facilities
Tactic 2: Building new facilities
Tactic 3: Initiating new programs
Tactic 4: Raising funds
Strategy 3: Presentation of a Positive Outlook
Tactic 1: Speaking positively and optimistically
Tactic 2: Expressing a belief in the value and ability of all community members
Strategy 4: Attention to the Needs of the Staff
Tactic 1: Providing reasonable compensation
Tactic 2: Evaluating fairly
Tactic 3: Offering staff development opportunities
PURPOSE 4: TO DEFINE A VISION
Strategy 1: Definition of Reality
Tactic 1: Identifying current community conditions and problems
Tactic 2: Proposing workable solutions to the problems
Strategy 2: Solicitation of Community Input
Tactic 1: Asking for ideas and suggestions
Tactic 2: Listening to the community
Strategy 3: Establishment of a Direction
Tactic 1: Articulating educationally sound research
Tactic 2: Respecting the values of the community
Strategy 4: Establishment of Goals
Tactic 1: Preparing the community for goal setting
Tactic 2: Collaborating with the community in goal setting

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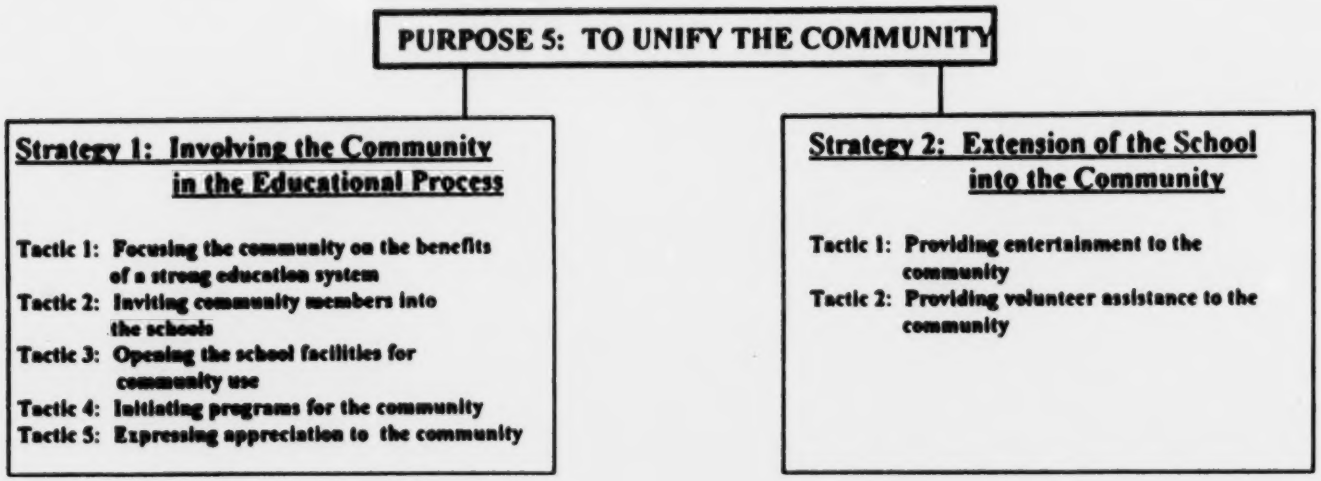
PURPOSE 5: TO UNIFY THE COMMUNITY
Strategy 1: Involving the Community in the Educational Process
Tactic 1: Focusing the community on the benefits of a strong education system
Tactic 2: Inviting community members into the schools
Tactic 3: Opening the school facilities for community use
Tactic 4: Initiating programs for the community
Tactic 5: Expressing appreciation to the community
Strategy 2: Extension of the School into the Community
Tactic 1: Providing entertainment to the community
Tactic 2: Providing volunteer assistance to the community

community climate described by the respondents as being calm, united, participating, and trusting. Evidence given for this climate were such statements as "there is less micromanagement of what goes on in the school district," "the superintendent is tipping the balance as far as equity goes," " there is focus on the fact that what we do is for the benefit of everyone," and "the superintendent considers a quality education to be more than raising TAAS [state accountability test] scores."

Further examination of the data revealed that the five purposes, implemented by a total of fourteen strategies and forty-one tactics, were specifically designed to address and remediate each of the sources of dissatisfaction (tension, divisiveness, lack of participation, loss of trust) that existed in the communities at the time the new superintendents assumed leadership. The first source of dissatisfaction, lack of vision, was addressed by Purpose 4, to define a vision. Through definition of reality, solicitation of community input, establishment of a direction, and establishment of goals, the superintendents created a sense of vision in the communities. The second source of dissatisfaction, governance problems, was addressed by Purpose 2, to teambuild with the governing board. Through development of trust and clear statements of expectations, the superintendents stabilized the governance in the districts. The third source of dissatisfaction, lack of quality in education, was addressed by Purpose 1, to establish commitment to the district; Purpose 3, to provide support; and Purpose 5, to unify the community. Through the creation of alliances, demonstration of competence in the tasks of superintendents, attention to the needs of staff, and involving the community in the educational process, the superintendents raised the level of education in the districts. The fourth source of dissatisfaction, poor resource management, was addressed by Purpose 1,

to establish commitment to the district; and Purpose 3, to provide support. Through the creation of alliances, demonstration of competence in the tasks of superintendent, and attention to the needs of the staff, the superintendents were able to manage the resources of the districts effectively and efficiently.

As a result of the direct addressing of the sources of community dissatisfaction, the community climate that had been characterized by tension, divisiveness, lack of participation, and loss of trust, changed to a climate described as being calm, united, participating, and trusting. (See Figure 7)

The Organizational Change Process Examined

A plethora of literature exists concerning the change process, a process that is embedded in the context of the structure of the organization. In one of the first studies addressing change, Lewin (1952) proposed a three-stage model of planned organizational change that involves a systematic moving from one stage to another. The first step, unfreezing, is the process of creating a readiness for change within the culture of the organization. The second step is the making of the desired change. The third step, refreezing, is the process of making the change permanent and resistant to modification.

Paramount in this change theory is the importance of the leadership that initiates the change process. According to Schein, the leader is responsible for inducing anxiety and guilt by providing disconfirming data, thereby creating a desire to change. The leader must also provide psychological safety to allow the organization's members to consider the need for change as well as unveiling and articulating a vision to guide the change effort.

When a Schein-Lewin template of the change process is superimposed

Figure 7

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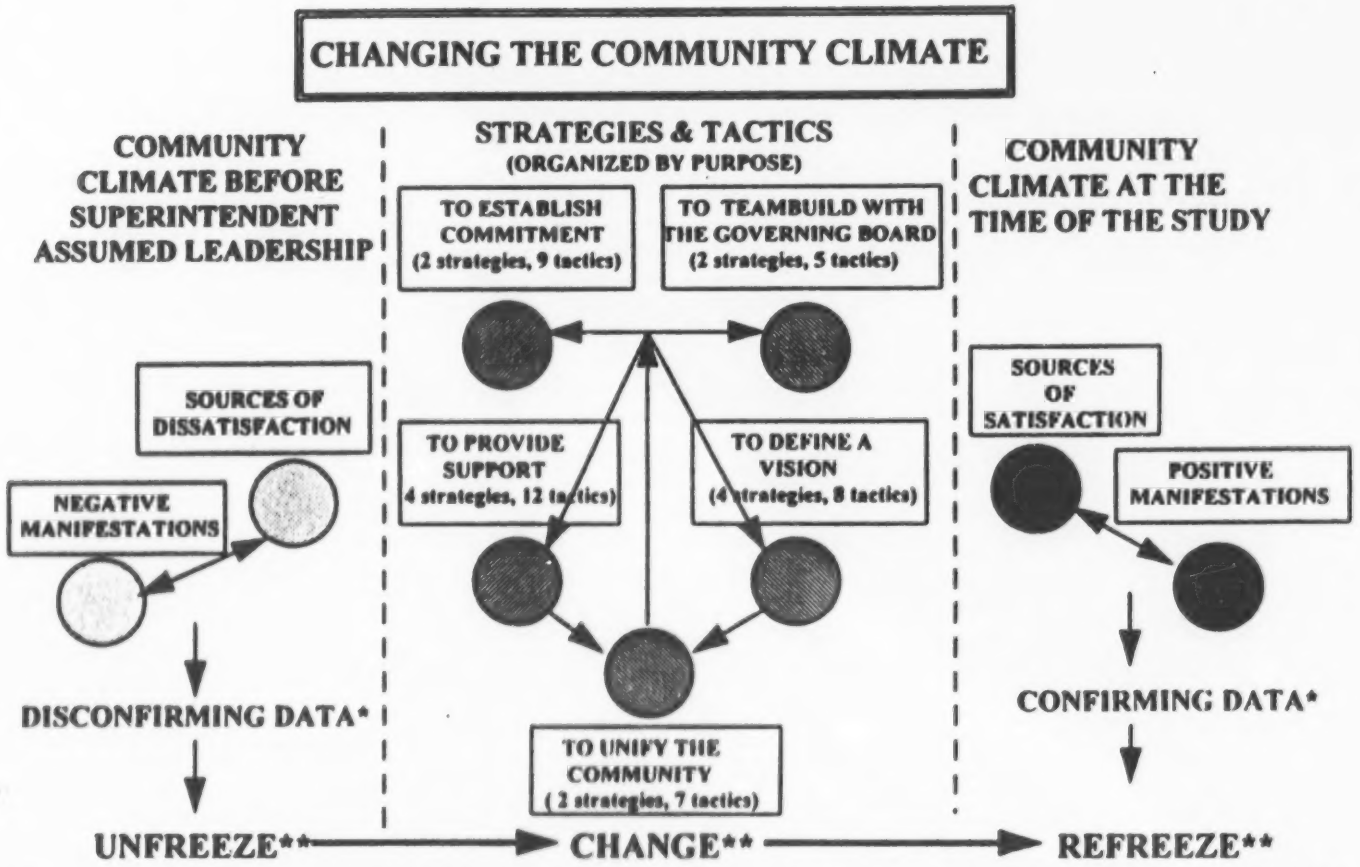
over the data from this study, it can be seen that the alignment of the tenets of the change process with the conditions existing in the districts was a critical factor in the positive outcome in the community climate. The negative community climate before the superintendents assumed leadership naturally provided the disconfirming data (Schein, 1992), unfreezing (Lewin, 1952) the situation to create a readiness for change. The situation was then ripe for a change agent superintendent to manifest the leadership roles and to apply strategies and tactics that would result in remediating the sources of dissatisfaction found in the district. The community satisfaction that grew out of the positive changes served as confirming data (Schein, 1992) which led to a refreezing (Lewin, 1952) of the situation. This made the change permanent and resistant to further modification. (See Figure 8)

Concluding Remarks

The public school superintendent today faces enormous challenges in making an appreciable difference in the education provided to the children of the community. An additional challenge is to stay in the job long enough to accomplish anything of lasting value because the average tenure of a superintendent in the United States is less than two and one-half years (Konnert & Augenstein, 1990; Kowalski, 1995). The lack of definition of the role of the superintendent and the lack of predictability in spoken and unspoken expectations results in controversy on the part of the community and confusion on the part of the superintendent (American School Board Journal, 1981). The challenge has become more complex as a result of the introduction of a multitude of varied populations, all with different needs and expectations of the school system. Ianaccone & Lutz (1970) succinctly and accurately state that the gap between a particular organization

Figure 8



* From Schein, E. H. (1992). Organizational Culture and Leadership. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

** From Lewin, K. (1952). Group decision and social change. In G.E. Swanson, T.N. Newcomb, and E.L. Hartley (eds) Readings in Social Psychology (Rev. ed.). New York: Holt, Rinehard, and Winston.

and its larger social universe widens more rapidly when the social composition of that universe undergoes rapid change. This has been shown to be true in the educational setting. Changing demographics, changing family patterns, increased mobility, and widely disparate economic statuses all contribute to a diverse milieu. As these groups have increased in political clout, the superintendency has become a focal point for demands that all children receive an appropriate education as defined in different ways by different populations (Owen, in press).

Yet, despite the tremendous challenges to success, a few superintendents not only survive but also thrive in difficult districts. In these districts, remarkable advances have been made in community climate thus freeing the superintendent and the educational staff to move forward on educational issues unimpeded by the draining influence and overt criticism of a negative community. The two subject superintendents were impressive men who moved into districts historically beset by conflict and united the communities under a common vision. Through a comprehensive examination of their leadership, I ascertained that they expertly played three roles: educational leader, political leader, and managerial leader. Furthermore, it became evident from the data collected in more than three hundred pages of interview text, that through these three roles, the superintendents were able to implement fourteen strategies and forty-one tactics with the ultimate goal of creating a community climate for educational improvement. The strategies and tactics were grouped under five general purposes, and each of these purposes was specifically targeted to remediate a source of dissatisfaction found in the district upon the arrival of the superintendent. A longitudinal view revealed that the application of the strategies and tactics resulted in the creation of sources of satisfaction which then translated into

positive manifestations in the community climate. Finally, Lewin's (1952) and Schein's (1992) change processes were applied to the actions of the superintendents, giving further credence to the fact that concrete and definable methods are available to public school superintendents through which they can successfully neutralize a negative community climate, allowing an environment to develop in which educational improvement can flourish.

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